

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

JAN 07 2010

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Blaser, Frank E., House
Other name/site number 173-5880-0896

2. Location

Street & number 136 N Crestway Avenue ☐ not for publication
City or town Wichita ☐ vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Sedgwick Code 173 Zip code 67208

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick Zollner
Patrick Zollner, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Kansas State Historical Society

11-24-09
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional
Comments.)

Signature of commenting official / Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the National
Register
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register

☐ removed from the National
Register

☐ other, (explain:)

Blaser, Frank E., House
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

Residential Resources of Wichita, KS

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from Instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from Instructions)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from Instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

Mission / Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from Instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: STUCCO

Roof: TILE

Other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Blaser, Frank E., House

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

FRANK E. BLASER, Builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Wichita Public Library

Blaser, Frank E., House
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, KS
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	4	6	5	1	2	9	5	4	1	7	2	3	2	0
Zone		Easting					Northing							

3														
Zone		Easting					Northing							

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Barbara R. Hammond/Associate Planner, Historic Preservation Office
City of Wichita, Metropolitan Area Planning
Organization Department Date September 8, 2009
Street & number 455 N. Main Street Telephone 316-268-4421
City or town Wichita State KS Zip code 67203

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name Alan J. Dwyer
Street & number 136 N. Crestway Ave Telephone 316-260-2398
City or town Wichita State KS Zip code 67208

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Blaser, Frank E., House
Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas
Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Frank E. Blaser House is located on Lots 29-30-31-32 of Block 2 in the Marsh Manor Addition, Wichita, Kansas, and is oriented toward the west on the east side of North Crestway Avenue. The surrounding neighborhood is known as College Hill, a compact residential neighborhood that developed in the 1920s and 1930s as a new suburb that attracted wealthy community leaders and middle-income families alike. The neighborhood retains its original street plan, density, setbacks, and landscaping with houses ranging from plainly-styled Craftsman bungalows to elaborate masonry villas in revivalist styles. A 1923 city park is situated in the south-central portion of the residential area. For the most part, the neighborhood is laid out on a grid pattern with the shape of the park causing a few curvilinear streets on its perimeter. Douglas Avenue, a main east-west corridor in Wichita bisects the neighborhood, splitting it evenly between the north boundary of Central Avenue and the south boundary of Kellogg Street (US 54). Oliver Street and Hillside Avenue form the east and west boundaries of the area. No major changes to the neighborhood have occurred since it was developed with the exception that houses on the far southern boundary between Oliver Street and Hillside Avenue were razed in the 1980s to accommodate development of Kellogg Street as a limited access highway. A retaining wall divides the remaining residential area from the throughway.

As described in the multiple property document "Residential Resources of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas, 1870-1957" (hereafter referred to as "MPD, Residential Resources of Wichita"), many Wichita building contractors purchased lots on speculation and built houses for immediate sale.¹ Such was the case with the houses on Block 2 of Marsh Manor Addition, all of which were built between the years 1923 and 1929. Many were built by contractors who frequently invested in College Hill property.² 136 North Crestway also was a contractor-owned and built residence, but in this case the contractor Frank E. Blaser lived with his family in the house for five years before selling it.

The Blaser House is architecturally intact as originally constructed. The Spanish Revival-style house is a 2,699 square-foot, two-story residence with an attached garage. Evidence shows that garages in the neighborhood were common and seems to signal a trend at the end of the 1920s in which automobiles rose beyond a novelty to a legitimate and accessible form of transportation. However, most garages were located at the rear of the lots, separated from the houses. The Blaser garage was unusual because in 1935 it was one of only four houses out of twenty-seven in Blocks 2 and 3 (Marsh Manor Addition) that had attached garages.³ This attached garage is distinct from the other three in the Addition because it is accessed on the rear (east) elevation; a drive encircles the rear of the house connecting the street to the garage.

¹ Kathy Morgan and Barbara Hammond, "Residential Resources of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas, 1870-1957" (City of Wichita, Kansas: Metropolitan Area Planning Department, 2007), 22.

² Building Permit Card File, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, City of Wichita. 455 N. Main, Wichita, KS 67203

³ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. 1935, Vol 2, Sheet 217.

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Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

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The Spanish Revival style, also known as Spanish Eclectic and Spanish Colonial Revival, was popular in the United States from about 1914 to 1940. It exceeded Mission Revival, which was prevalent before 1920, in the use of elaborate Spanish prototypes. Spanish Revival was influenced by the rich details of Mediterranean architecture, including Spanish Baroque, Moorish, and Gothic elements. Multi-level, red tile roofs are generally low-pitched with little or no eave overhang. Stucco exteriors are characteristic with half-rounded doors and windows set in asymmetrical arrangements. Elaborate tile work, applied relief ornamentation, and wrought iron grillwork create frames around doorways and windows and are used as decorative accents on the interior as well.⁴ The Blaser House exhibits all of these stylistic traits.

The exterior of the house is entirely finished in vermiculated stucco down to grade level so that no foundation is visible. Asymmetrical but well-balanced planes, levels, and bays define the façade. The multi-level side-gabled roof is laid with varicolored tiles in the Mission Tile pattern. Compact and sculptural mass is the defining form of this structure.

Exterior

The building includes two primary masses, the residence on the south and the garage on the north.

West Elevation (front)

The garage and rooms to the north end of the house are set in receding segments from the central portion and are counterbalanced by a small shed roof over the south end of the house that is edged with a low parapet wall. The principle feature of the west elevation is the smoothly finished, cast concrete arch that forms a heavy hooded niche for the round arch, wood front door. The mass of the arched doorway is grounded by low concrete walls that edge the brick stoop. The cast concrete material is repeated in door sills and lintels. To the left of the front door there is a triple window with cast dividers that extend upward to a raised lintel creating the effect of simple pilasters. Each of the three windows includes twelve-light casements above and sixteen-light casements below. Two small casement windows to the right of the door have tall cast lintels. This exaggeration of height brings the small windows into balance with the triple window on the left. The small windows are set with two-over-two lights and that pattern of four is repeated by four small recesses arranged in a square pattern in the wall near the eave.

The windows on the north segment of the west elevation are arranged with a single casement window set with twelve lights on the first floor level and two windows on the second floor level. One is a sixteen-light casement; the other is a narrow vertical window with three fixed lights. The garage extension on the north end contains one narrow window that is covered with iron grille work. The cast concrete window surround is asymmetrically-shaped and continues down the wall to grade level. This low relief plane creates the illusion of a doorway with a small barred window.

The ell formed by the division of the central portion and the north portion of the west elevation contains a chimney that serves the interior fireplace. Asymmetry of design is continued in the brick chimney which contains a few field stones randomly set in the bricks, and an unusual pyramidal chimney base built of field stones adds to the impression of mass and masonry materials associated with Spanish Revivalism. A

⁴ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000, 417.

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Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas
Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

cast concrete scrolled bracket is set in the chimney to form a decorative transition between the fireplace box and the chimney throat.

South Elevation (Side)

The shed roof on the south elevation of the house is supported by two wing walls that extend from the house. Two large masonry piers at the bases of the extending walls solidify the weight of the total arrangement, which suggests a courtyard. This small area encloses a window arrangement containing a casement with fixed lights above and two flanking vertical fixed windows. The Spanish milieu is evoked by an iron balconet on the center window.

The western portion of the south elevation recedes in two more planes with six-light windows (ground floor, second floor); double twelve-light windows (second floor), and a south entrance to the house that accesses the dining room.

East Elevation (Rear)

As on the west and south elevations, windows are of varying size but are more repetitive than on the west and offer many views into the back yard. This side of the house contains the bedrooms and the kitchen/dining areas. Again, a mixture of planes breaks up the roofline as well as the wall surface; an overhang of the second floor creates a snug surround for the breakfast room. The attached double garage is accessed by the original overhead door and a walk-in door provides entry to the house between the garage and the kitchen.

North Elevation (Side)

The ground floor level contains the garage; one window is centered on this wall. Two windows are located at the second floor level on either side of the peak of the gabled garage roof.

Interior

Ground Floor

The front door enters into a foyer that leads down to the left into a grand living room with many Spanish Revival features. The floor of the foyer is inlaid with granite terrazzo, as is an interior foyer that leads from the living room to the rear of the house. Original wide oak flooring remains in the living room.

A functioning, wood-burning fireplace with a massive wood manteltree dominates the north wall of the living room. Currently the fireplace surround is hand-painted to simulate irregularly cut tiles, but the surface is actually the original plaster wall.

A pointed arch doorway enters a central hallway in the rear half of the house. The hall contains a butler's pantry and leads north to a small bathroom, the basement stairs, and the garage. It also accesses the kitchen/breakfast room. A door from the kitchen leads south into the dining room, which has exposed beams in the ceiling.

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Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas
Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

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The pointed-arch doorway in the living room and a quarter-turn staircase that leads to a second floor landing direct the eye upward to the soaring exposed rafters and beams of the ceiling. A large, pointed arch niche in the stairway wall adds to the effect. The niche contains a six-light casement window and several small decorative tiles are imbedded in the wall plaster of the niche and base of the landing. The ceiling beams, manteltree, and banister provide wood accents to the tall plastered walls. The doorway in the living room that leads to the kitchen and the doorway at the second floor landing are decorated by scrolled consoles; a wrought iron gate on the second floor door extends the Spanish motif.

To the right from the front foyer one can also enter a room on the south end of the house. This room was probably an informal living room or study in the original house plan because it also accesses the dining room.

Second Floor

There are three bedrooms and three bathrooms on the second floor. They are aligned on the east and south sides of the house over the kitchen, dining room and study because the living room space on the ground floor is two stories high. Due to the rambling floor and roof plans of the house, the rooms vary in their size and configuration, with ceilings that follow the varying gables of the roof. Because all windows in the house are metal-framed casements, there is no interior wood window trim, nor is there any crown molding. This overall simplicity of design exemplifies the Spanish Revival style of the architecture.

The bedrooms and two of bathrooms have retained original architectural details that were common to residences of the 1920s and 1930s bungalow era such as wall niches, steam radiators, built-in cabinetry. The tile tub surrounds in these bathrooms appear to have been installed in the 1950s and are in good condition.

Because all windows in the house are metal-framed casements, there is no interior wood window trim, nor is there any crown molding. This overall simplicity of design exemplifies the Spanish Revival style of the architecture.

Basement

The house is built over a full basement, which contains the original Dunkirk furnace with gas-fired boiler that serves the steam radiators throughout the house. In order to avoid radiators looking out of place in the stylized Spanish form of the living room, the design integrated them behind the walls so that they are out of sight. Metal vents in the walls allow the heat to be expelled into the room. Standard floor radiators are utilized throughout the rest of the house.

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Blaser, Frank E., House
Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas
Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Frank E. Blaser House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture** as it relates to the broad patterns of stylistic revivalism in the United States during the early twentieth century. It is nominated as part of the "Residential Resources of Wichita" multiple property listing, and meets the registration requirements for the *Single-Family Residence* property type. The house is named for the builder and original owner Frank E. Blaser, who owned and operated a general contracting business in Wichita. He maintained an office at 430 North Rock Island Avenue throughout his career; making his initial mark on Wichita by building the Stanley Elementary School (Schmidt, Boucher, and Overend, Architects), followed by gaining the contracts to construct three major academic buildings for the University of Wichita.⁵ His contracting firm was an active contributor to the Wichita built environment from 1928 to 1959.

The period of significance for the Frank E. Blaser House is 1929, which is the year it was constructed. Blaser applied for a permit to build his house on March 25, 1929 at an estimated cost of \$10,000. No other applicant, such as an architect, is listed on the permit application. The two-story residence with an attached garage was designed in the Spanish Revival style (also known as Spanish Eclectic and Spanish Colonial Revival). It is located in the College Hill neighborhood of Wichita.

The architecture in the College Hill neighborhood is dominated by Tudor Revival, English Cottage, American Foursquare, Classical Revival, and Craftsman styles and punctuated with Mission Revival and Spanish Revival; Prairie Style residences form a small minority. The Spanish styling on the Frank E. Blaser House is a significant example of its kind, as Spanish residential design is less typical in states outside the Southwest and Texas and Florida.⁶

Because Kansas is geographically transitional between the eastern states and the Southwest, the city of Wichita adopted an identity as a gateway to the Southwest in the 1870s and 1880s. This aspect was enabled by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, which was chartered in Kansas in 1859 and began to connect Wichita to points east in 1874.⁷ The company exercised great influence on the settlement of the southwestern United States and promoted many locations on its routes, including Sedgwick County, Kansas as ideal destinations.^{8, 9} Therefore, it is not unusual that there would still be interest in Spanish influences in Kansas during the Revivalist period of the 1920s. In Wichita they were most popularly applied to one- and two-story brick commercial buildings, and particularly manifested in red tile roofs.

⁵ *Wichita Beacon*, Mar 8, 1928: 16; *Wichita Eagle*, Jan 10, 1930:2; *Wichita Beacon*, Nov 5, 1938: 10.

⁶ "Architectural Styles of America" Northern Arizona University Department of Planning, Geography, and Recreation. <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~twp/architecture>. Accessed Feb 2009.

⁷ *Wichita Eagle*, Apr 24, 1873: 3.

⁸ *Wichita Eagle*, Apr 23, 1874:3.

⁹ "Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company." *Encyclopedia Britannica* 2009. <http://www.britannica.com>.

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Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

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Residences, too were designed in the Spanish styles, but were less common than other Revivalist-style homes.¹⁰ They occurred intermittently as two-story houses in College Hill and one-story Spanish bungalows in the Riverside neighborhood; less frequently others were scattered about the city.

The Blaser House exhibits most of the elements of typify Spanish Revivalism, so much so that authors Virginia and Lee McAlester included a photograph of the home in their book, *A Field Guide to American House* as an example of the Spanish Eclectic style.¹¹ The authors included photographs of thirty-three houses in this category. Of these, eleven were in California; ten were in Texas; one was in Oklahoma. The South was represented by Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Kentucky. Two were in Missouri and three were in Kansas. This geographical distribution aligns with the observation that the Spanish influence flowed out of Mexico and was adopted primarily in the southwestern and southeastern United States and extended to a lesser degree into the Midwest. In an unusual derivation from the pattern, one house was located in New York.

Two of the Kansas photos are of Wichita homes, the Frank E. Blaser House and the C.M. Jackman House (NRHP 2007). The Blaser House is duly representative of the Spanish Revival – or as McAlester and McAlester prefer – Spanish Eclectic style. The authors note that the “*projecting* [emphasis added] door surround is atypical” however, the round arch of the doorway is most definitely associated with this style. The side-gabled roof of red tiles, the stucco exterior, and asymmetry of window placements immediately set the house apart from the brick veneer and wide Craftsman eaves or steep Tudor gables of its neighbors. The use of small iron grilles and cast sills and lintels creates excellent highlights, while the prominent round arch doorway and varying planes of the walls and roof emphasize the sculptural and monolithic form of the total building.¹²

Property History

As Wichita outgrew the Victorian-era neighborhoods north of the city center, most prosperous citizens favored an eastward movement along Douglas Avenue. Two miles east of the downtown core, the most attractive site was a height of land overlooking the Arkansas River valley. Although this area had been platted since 1884, most of the development took place from 1910 through the 1920s. By 1935 the area was entirely developed. The total area that we now know as the College Hill neighborhood was bounded on the north by Central Avenue and on the south by Kellogg Street. The western boundary was at Hillside Avenue and the east boundary, Oliver Street, also marked the City Limits.

The Frank E. Blaser House is located on Lots 29, 30, 32, and 32 of Block 2 in the Marsh Manor Addition in the College Hill neighborhood. The Addition was platted by Agnes and Samuel S. Marsh in 1916.

¹⁰ Morgan and Hammond, “Residential Resources of Wichita,” 105.

¹¹ McAlester and McAlester, *Field Guide to American Houses*, 422.

¹² Herbert Gottlieb and Jan Jennings. *American Vernacular Design 1870-1940*. New York: VanNostrand Reinhold Co, 1985, 227.

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Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas
Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

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The *Wichita Beacon* reported in April 1916 that the land was to be platted into regulation building lots and offered for sale through the agency of the Home Realty and Investment Company of Emporia, Kansas, "an experienced subdivision sales company operating extensively through New England and the Middle West."¹³ Agnes Marsh's signature on the survey was notarized in Dallas County, Texas; Samuel's signature was notarized in Wichita ten days later and registered with Sedgwick County on the same day. This suggests that the Marshes may have lived in Texas and while Samuel Marsh was in Wichita seeing to the affairs of the purchase, his wife signed the survey and mailed it back to him to be registered in Wichita. They are not listed as residents of Wichita in the city directories or the census. This procedure coincides with the history of land plats in Kansas made by out-of-state investors and eastern lending agencies as described in the MPD, "Residential Resources of Wichita."¹⁴

Marsh Manor Addition is two blocks in length and at the time of the plat it was bounded on the east by Marsh Avenue and on the west by East Street. The name East Street was already in place from adjacent plats. Second Street and Douglas Avenue form the north and south boundaries, respectively. During the time that College Hill was platted and developed, many streets were segmented by different names. This was due to the fact that people assigned names of their personal preference in their own plats. Eventually it became necessary to standardize the street names that ran through several different plats. Such was the case with Marsh Avenue and East Street, which were renamed in 1926 to correspond with extensions to the north and south. Marsh Avenue became Terrace Drive and East Street was renamed Crestway Avenue.

The sale and development of lots in Marsh Manor occurred over the next decade, with the majority of houses being built between 1923 and 1929.¹⁵ This was a time of high building activity in the desirable College Hill neighborhood. The building permit applications and land transfer records show that many lots in Marsh Manor, as in other additions, were owned by local building contractors who sold the houses upon construction. As was common during the period, most houses were built from pattern book plans. In addition to Frank Blaser, other well-known Wichita contractors who built and sold houses on Terrace Drive and Crestway include John B. Dunn, Willis H. Purdy, Walter Williams, S.S. Westvold, A.N. Bontz & Son, and Seidl-Neely Construction Company.¹⁶

Frank E. Blaser (1892-1969)

Franklin Eugene Blaser was born on May 2, 1892 in Clinton, Missouri. He was the oldest of Godfrey (George) and Sarah Blaser's three children, having a younger sister Lucille and a brother Benjamin. By the time that he registered for the draft in 1917 Frank had married and established a residence in his hometown of Columbia, Missouri with his wife Stella (Estella Dumas) and their daughter Betty, who was born in 1914. The draft registration records that at that time he lived in Columbia but was employed by Eberhardt Construction Company in Wichita, Kansas as a plasterer.

¹³ *Wichita Beacon*, Apr 5, 1916: 11.

¹⁴ Morgan and Hammond, "Residential Resources of Wichita," 16-19.

¹⁵ Building Permit Card File. MAPD.

¹⁶ Building Permit Card File. MAPD.

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Residential Resources of Wichita, 1870-1957

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Eberhardt was a large company based in Salina, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri. The company worked on many commercial and public buildings throughout those states, which may account for Blaser's ability to find construction work in Wichita. In 1920, Frank and Stella lived in Kansas City, Missouri; his occupation was given as "Contractor."¹⁷ The couple is listed in the Wichita City Directory of 1923 for one year; this might indicate that Frank kept living quarters in Wichita because of his job with Eberhardt. By 1925 the family was living in Fort Scott, Kansas. It may have been at that time that Frank met Clarence Vollmer who also lived with his wife in Fort Scott.¹⁸ Vollmer found employment in 1926 with Eberhardt in Wichita where Blaser was working for the company on the construction of Roosevelt Intermediate School. In 1927 the two men left Eberhardt to form their own business, Blaser-Vollmer Construction Company. They moved their families to Wichita where they had gained the contract to build a brick addition to Alexander Hamilton Intermediate School in Wichita.^{19, 20} It was during this time that Frank Blaser built the house at 136 North Crestway Avenue.

Frank Blaser, his wife Stella, and their daughter Betty lived in the Crestway Avenue house from 1930 to 1934. Reasons for why Blaser sold the house are unknown. Between 1934 and 1957 the house was occupied by four subsequent owners, including Russell and Margaret Atridge, William and Maurine Greenberg, Herman and Lucille Ewers, and John and Nellie O'Donnell. On leaving 136 North Crestway, the Blaser family lived for one year in a flat on South Crestway; in 1936 they moved to a 10-year old house at 3901 E. Edgemont Place in the middle-class neighborhood of Sleepy Hollow. Betty, at this time was 22-year old art student and lived at home with her parents.

The Blaser-Vollmer enterprise managed several big projects at the University of Wichita (now Wichita State University) over the six years of their partnership. They signed contracts to build the following: Science Building (now McKinley Hall), June 9, 1928 for a cost of \$128,933; a heating tunnel, July 31, 1928, cost: \$6150; an addition to the men's gymnasium (now Henrion Gym), July 31, 1928: cost \$54,778; and the Administration Building (now Jardine Hall), January, 1930, cost: \$187,730.^{21, 22}

In 1935 Frank Blaser and Clarence Vollmer broke up their joint venture and Vollmer joined a new partnership with H.I. Ellis (Ellis-Vollmer Construction).²³ Frank formed his own business, Blaser Construction Company.

As the country moved through the Great Depression, the City of Wichita tapped into federal relief programs that created local jobs in the construction of public buildings, parks, and infrastructure. One such project was yet another new building for Wichita University, which was a municipally owned school. In September 1938 the *Wichita Beacon* announced that the government had approved a grant of

¹⁷ US Census, 1925/Kansas.

¹⁸ US Census, 1925/Kansas.

¹⁹ *Wichita Eagle*. Dec 14, 1949:9A. *Wichita Eagle*. Jan 26, 1962: 7A.

²⁰ *Wichita Eagle*. Aug 4, 1927: 14.

²¹ Wichita State University Department of Special Collections: University Archives, Record Group 00-02, Box 19FF 12.

²² Building Permit Card File, MAPD.

²³ *Wichita Eagle*. Dec 14, 1949:9A.

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\$53,997 of Public Works Administration funds towards cost of construction of a new library at WU. The total amount of the application was \$119,994.²⁴ The federal funds were to pay 45% of the cost; the balance would be paid by the university. The contract was let to the Frank E. Blaser Construction Company on his bid of \$111,073. Prominent Wichita architect Ed Forsblom was selected to design the building.²⁵

All of the buildings that Blaser Construction Company built for Wichita University are extant; at least two may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (Administration Building; Library Building).

Blaser Construction Company remained in business until Frank retired in 1959.²⁶ Frank Blaser's last license as a general contractor with the City of Wichita is dated 1958.²⁷

In the late 1940s Frank and Stella built an elegant new house at 28 E. Willowbrook Road in the elite suburb of Eastborough where they lived out their remaining years. Betty dropped her nickname in college and entered the professional world as E. Abigail Blaser.²⁸ After college and a period of international travel Abigail returned to Wichita and resumed residence with her parents. During the years 1951-1955 she is named as a co-owner with her father in the Frank E. Blaser Building Company.²⁹ However, there is no other documentation that describes her role in the company. In 1952 she began a 27-year career as Secretary to the Director of the Art Department at Wichita University (now Wichita State University).

Frank and Stella Blaser were members of Wichita Country Club. He was a member of the Midian Shrine; Stella was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Minisa Chapter.³⁰ The couple attended St. James Episcopal Church, where a memorial was established at Frank's death. Frank died in June 1969; Stella died in March 1977. They are entombed in the Mission Chapel Mausoleum at Old Mission Cemetery in Wichita. After the death of her mother, Abigail retired to Tucson, Arizona in 1979; she died there in 1982.³¹

Summary

The Frank E. Blaser House (1929) is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the multiple property listing "Residential Resources of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas 1870-1957." It meets National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture and is of local significance in the history of the housing construction in Wichita, Kansas. The house relates to trends in architectural stylistic revivalism because it retains character-defining features of the Spanish Revival style on the interior and exterior. Most notably, the exterior stucco surfaces of varied planes are punctuated with an asymmetrical

²⁴ *Wichita Beacon*. Sept 1, 1938:1.

²⁵ *Wichita Beacon*. Nov 5, 1938:10.

²⁶ *Wichita City Directory*: 1960.

²⁷ Contractor License Card File, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, City of Wichita. 455 N. Main, Wichita, KS 67203.

²⁸ Social Security Death Index, Ancestry.com.

²⁹ *Wichita City Directories*: 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955.

³⁰ *Wichita Social Directory*. 1950.

³¹ *Wichita Eagle Beacon*. Feb 28, 1982:11B

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arrangement of windows, iron grillwork, and a round arch front entrance, all of which exemplify the style. The theme is repeated on the interior with simple plaster walls that form a backdrop for the massive timber manteltree, arched niche, and iron and tile accents. These characteristics provide an excellent example of Spanish Revival residential style outside of the southwestern and southeastern United States where the style was most prominent.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is addressed as 136 North Crestway Avenue in the city of Wichita, Kansas. It is located in Marsh Manor Addition, Block 2, Lots 29-30-31-32 of Section 23, Township 27 Range 01 East of the 6th P.M. in Sedgwick County, Kansas.

The property is bounded on the north by an adjacent property addressed as 146 North Crestway, on the south by address 130 South Crestway, on the east by properties addressed as 135 and 139 North Terrace Drive, and on the west by Crestway Avenue.

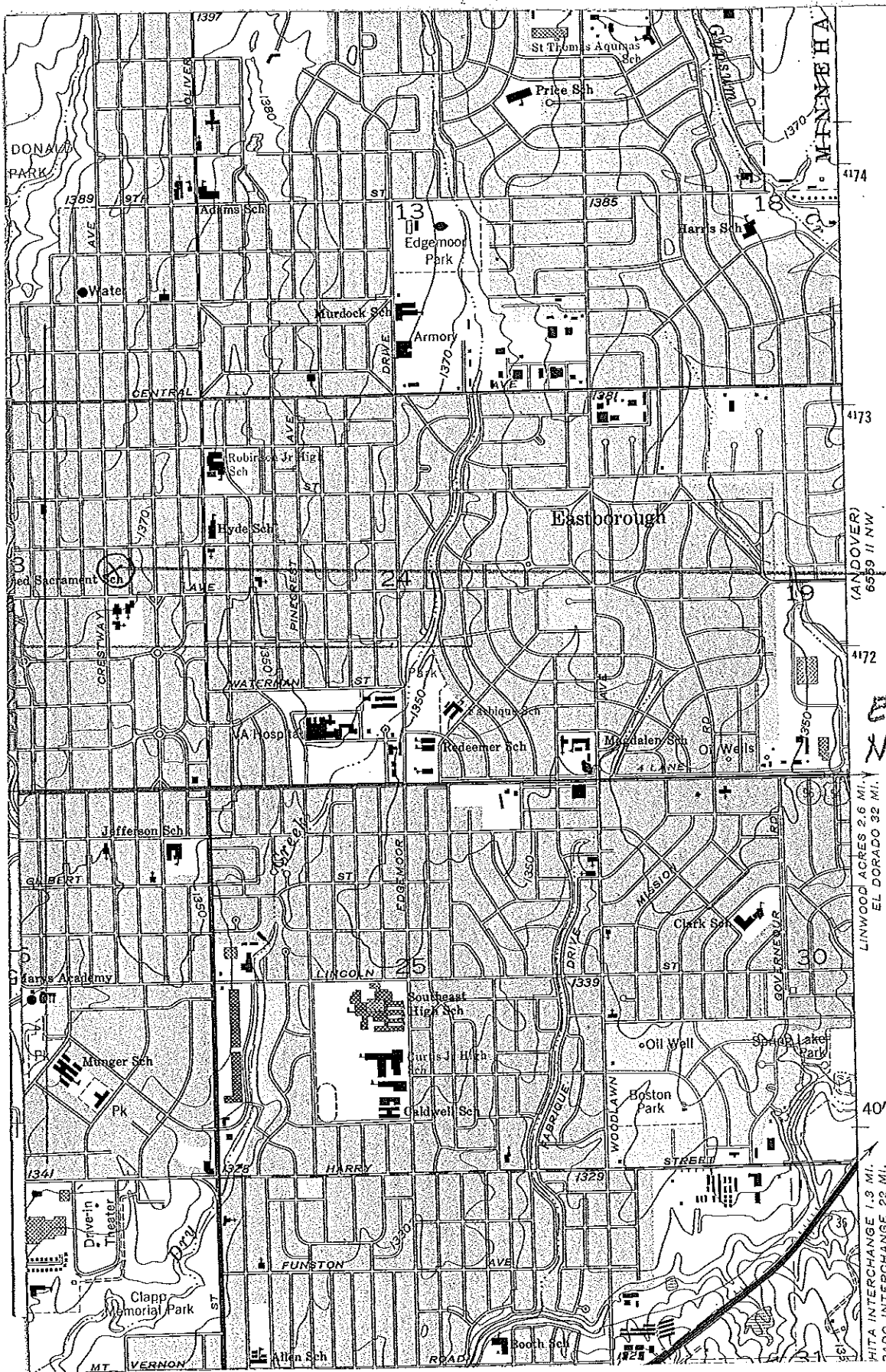
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the house.

PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Property Name: Frank E. Blaser House
Location: 136 N Crestway
Photographer: Sarah Martin
Date: July 8, 2009

Photo 1: West (front) and south (side) elevations, facing NE
Photo 2: South (side) elevation, facing N
Photo 3: West (front) elevation showing corner chimney (right) and garage bay (left), facing E
Photo 4: West (front) elevation showing corner chimney, facing E
Photo 5: West (front) elevation showing window and entrance detail, facing NE
Photo 6: East (rear) elevation, facing NW
Photo 7: East (rear) elevation showing garage, facing W
Photo 8: Interior, main staircase located in living room, facing S
Photo 9: Interior, arch leading to kitchen and rear of house, facing E
Photo 10: Interior, arched door adjacent to main arched entrance, facing NW
Photo 11: Interior, second floor room with built in cabinets with decorative doors, facing S
Photo 12: Interior, balcony of main staircase overlooking living room, facing E
Photo 13: Arched front door



Blaser House
136 N. Crestway
Wichita KS

E=651295
N=4172320
Z=145

LANDOVER 6559 II NW
LINWOOD ACRES 2.6 MI.
EL DORADO 32 MI.
HITA INTERCHANGE 1.3 MI.
WADO INTERCHANGE 22 MI.